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PROGRESS REPORT ON ECE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Report by the Chairman of the
Group of Experts on the Programme of Work

The Commission, at its Ad Hoc Informal Meeting of 5 November 2001, requested the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work to conduct a "systematic evaluation" of ECE Operational Activities and to report back thereon. The report below summarizes the Group's discussions and concludes that no formal action is required by the Commission at this point.

1. As requested by the Commission, the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) met on a number of occasions to discuss ECE operational activities and organised a briefing meeting with senior staff of the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities. In addition, the Chairman of the GEPW held bilateral consultations with several member States, as well as with staff from the secretariat.

2. Initial discussions indicated that member States were unclear about both the strategy and the process of operational activities. This made an assessment and evaluation difficult. It was acknowledged that the secretariat had supplied substantial information on operational activities (e.g. E/ECE/1390 of 29 August 2001 and supplements). But, nevertheless, member States lacked a clear understanding of the procedures involved in technical assistance activities, from conception through funding and implementation, and on to follow-up and evaluation.

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3. Member States thought that the presentation of the regular reports on ECE technical assistance activities could be simplified, less detailed and more 'use-friendly' for member States. Further information could always be requested if necessary. This would also have the advantage of providing time and efficiency benefits for the secretariat.

4. On funding, experts asked the secretariat to provide clear, concise and timely documents when seeking project funds from capitals. All projects should be within the overall mandate of ECE, and should fall clearly within a niche area of ECE activity. In order to overcome at least some of the difficulties associated with fundraising, the secretariat should be able to demonstrate clearly why ECE is better placed than other organizations to carry out particular projects. Experts from some potential donor countries thought it would be easier for them to market project proposals in their capitals if they were well drafted and argued, with an indication of funding requirements. A proposed format for fundraising requests is attached to this report.

5. The briefing provided by the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities (CUOA) was welcome, and answered many queries that experts had concerning ECE technical assistance activities. Experts felt that regular briefings by the secretariat, perhaps on a six-monthly basis, would enable them to keep abreast of developments and allow them to make proposals for new projects.

6. The briefing did not address issues such as project evaluation or impact assessment, but these issues will be discussed more substantively at a future briefing meeting, as will be the linkages between Regional Advisers, regular Division staff and the Principal Subsidiary Bodies in carrying out technical assistance activities.

7. Experts agreed that, on the issues discussed so far, it was not necessary for any formal recommendations to be made to the Commission. They expressed gratitude to the CUOA for its readiness to provide briefing meetings on a regular basis, and for its willingness to supply information to the Group.

ECE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
PROJECT OUTLINE

Project title:
Background: *(Where did the proposal originate?)*
Capacity/niche: *(Does the secretariat have existing capacity and resources to carry out the project? And on which niche area of ECE expertise will the project depend?)*
Objectives and expected outcome: *(What does the project aim to achieve, and how will the outcome be measured?)*
Project details: *(Please provide full details of the proposed project, including any implementing partners)*
Timetable: *(Project dates; deadline for funding)*
Funding requirements: *(Please provide a full breakdown of costs for this project)*

Contact for further information: